

## **Don't Miss your Reentry Window**

By Steven L. Anderson, Ph.D., MBA

I'm currently reading the book, *Apollo 13*, by astronaut, Jim Lovell and Jeffrey Kluger. As you may know, an oxygen tank on that space ship blew up and the astronauts had to really pull together with the personnel in Houston to arrive safely on earth. What is interesting to me is how the occupants of the space ship were able to keep their cool when any mistakes might have resulted in certain death. For instance, in one situation the space ship had to align itself for reentry into the earth's atmosphere. They had to use the rockets from the lunar module to get lined up properly. This was a very tricky process because they only had a 2.5 degree window to aim at to penetrate the earth's atmosphere. If they came in too shallow, they would skip out into space. If they came in too steep they would burn up in the earth's atmosphere.

T.S. Elliot once said, "We must not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time." I think what he means is that when we are born we are perfect. Through the process of growing up we get banged around a lot, much like Apollo 13, and lose our bearings. Only through much diligence and hard work are we able to "arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time."

I think that, in a sense, just like those astronauts we are all trying to get home to our true selves. If we do it, life is wonderful, if we do not, we experience feelings of longing and incompleteness. But the journey is not an easy one. It is not for the feint hearted. As T.S. Elliot says, "We must not cease from exploration". I think that a part of the exploration that, too often gets overlooked, is that our window of reentry into ourselves is a narrow one. It's so easy to be going down the wrong path and we are way out of sync with ourselves before we realize where we have gone wrong. As Paul Simon says in his song "Slip Sliding Away", "We work our jobs, collect our pay. Believe we're gliding down the highway when in fact we're slip sliding away."

I think that the key to hitting that reentry window is to take the time to ask ourselves if our present journey feels like it is getting us home. Then we must have the necessary courage to make adjustments to our trajectory to hit that window of reentry. The decisions we make in these moments, though seemingly meaningless, have massive impacts upon the outcome of our lives.